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The Military Consequences of Munich

BY GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

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The Military Consequences of Munich

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with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association

THE Munich accord of September 30 served notice on the world that force underlies all international relations as a possible final arbiter;¹ it also profoundly altered the conditions under which force may be applied tomorrow in Europe and the world. The military and strategic conditions which prevailed in Europe before Munich differ fundamentally from those which prevail today.

THE BALANCE OF POWER BEFORE MUNICH

Roughly, the military balance of pre-Munich Europe was not unlike that of 1914. In the West, France and Britain had a military alliance, while Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and the Scandinavian states were neutral. In contrast to 1914, Italy and Germany dominated a part of Spain; but their intervention was at the mercy of Anglo-French sea power.

In Middle Europe, Germany had absorbed Austria, acquiring a common frontier with Italy. Hungary, desiring revision, inclined toward Germany, hoping with German aid to fulfill its irredentist dreams. Czechoslovakia, a strong military state, barred Germany's path to the Central European plain.² This resistance, however, was to some extent counterbalanced by Poland's orientation toward Germany. Rumania and Yugoslavia were determined to prevent the realization of Hungarian, if not German, ambitions at Czechoslovakia's expense. In the East, the Soviet Union was apparently ready to play an active part in opposing the German *Drang nach Osten*, but only if and when it had concrete evidence that France and Britain would act likewise.

The German army was not ready for a general war, nor did Germany have a navy comparable to that of 1914. The Nazis had weaned Poland from the French alliance, weakened the Francophile tend-

ency of Yugoslavia and Rumania, formed the Rome-Berlin axis with Italy. Yet, in spite of these diplomatic achievements, Germany was not ready to face the armed force of the 1914 Triple Entente.

But after Munich, the military balance underwent a decisive change. First of all, Czechoslovakia, deprived of its mountain defenses, was reduced to military impotence. The way was opened for a German political, economic and military advance down the Danube valley toward the agricultural and mineral resources of Central and South-eastern Europe. Next, the confidence of the states of this region in the value of British and French support was severely shaken. Poland temporarily drifted out of the French orbit. Russia, at least for the moment, turned its back on the affairs of Europe. Germany acquired that free hand in the East which had been the object of its foreign policy. Meanwhile, Britain and France have not only been isolated in the West, but seeds of mutual distrust have been sown between them.

FRANCE

The chief military aim of France is security—security for its territorial frontiers in Europe and its colonial empire.³ Since the World War, France has sought to achieve security against a possible German war of revenge by trying to surround Germany with a *cordon sanitaire* of military alliances, developing close relations with Britain, and maintaining its armaments at a high level.

The basic cause of French anxiety regarding Germany is man power. France has a population of 42,000,000, which has changed but little for three-quarters of a century. The French birth rate is steadily declining. In contrast Germany, before the *Anschluss*, had a population of 68,000,000, with an increasing birth rate. To these numbers have been added 10,000,000 Austrians and Sudeten Ger-

1. Cf. Rear Admiral A. T. Mahan, U.S.N., *Armaments and Arbitration* (New York, Harpers, 1912), p. 36.

2. Colonel Emanuel Moravec, *The Strategic Importance of Czechoslovakia for Western Europe* (Prague, Orbis, 1936).

3. Lieut. Colonel Sarraz, "L'organisation défensive de l'empire français d'outre-mer," *Revue Militaire Générale* (Paris), September 1938.

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mans, giving a total population almost twice that of France.

In order to counterbalance German man power, France has drawn on its colonies for military strength, and there are at present some 50,000 colonial native troops stationed in France.⁴ But France also depended to a large extent on its allies.

French strategy was based, first of all, on an impassable frontier barrier, which would assure France against sudden invasions like those of 1870 or 1914, and give time to cover the mobilization of its reserves (say four to eight days), the transportation of troops from North Africa (about two weeks), and the arrival of British forces. This barrier now exists in the Maginot Line, a series of fortified positions covering the whole German frontier and parts of the Belgian and Swiss borders. The garrisons of these fortifications consist of 50,000 specially trained troops, drawing 250,000 reserves from near-by areas.

Behind this barrier France can mobilize immediately the 27 divisions of its first-line army, with five cavalry divisions and auxiliary formations. Of these, the cavalry divisions and ten specially organized, fully motorized infantry divisions form the *troupes de couverture*, which will move swiftly up in support of the Maginot Line, dealing with any possible break-through, or concentrating toward a threatened flank. The bulk of France's army, however, now consists of reserve divisions, of which there are 42. The demands of the fortress troops, the air force, the tanks and other new formations, coupled with the fact that the classes now serving are those of the "war-baby" years of low birth rates, have compelled France to reduce the number of its first-line divisions, of which there were 44 in 1914, but only 27 (of which 6 are colonial) today. The reserve divisions, regarded as distinctly inferior in 1914, are today France's mainstay. They have been brought to a high degree of perfection in training and equipment, and have excellent officer personnel.

If France is at war with both Germany and Italy, it is very likely that it will continue to use a defensive strategy toward Germany, while assuming the offensive toward Italy. The French do not think highly of the Italian army, and the configuration of the Alpine passes, converging from France toward Italy, favors the offensive in this direction.⁵ One school of military thought in France favored an offensive striking from the Rhine cross-

ings toward the Upper Danube between Ulm and Ratisbon;⁶ this calculation, however, was based on the assumption that the Czech army—34 divisions all told—would be engaging part of the German forces.

After Munich, France is isolated—save for Britain—and its strategy must be revised. It becomes more necessary than ever that the lines of communication between France and its North African empire should remain open. Maintenance of these lines is the primary task of the French navy.

From Sardinia and Sicily the Italian fleet could seriously interfere with the main line Algiers-Marseilles, but not at all with the exterior line Bordeaux-Casablanca. An Italian foothold in Spain, however, would alter this situation. Possession of the Balearic Islands would enable Italian air power to operate effectively against French transports on the Algiers-Marseilles route. Spain's Atlantic ports make it possible for Italy to operate beyond the Straits of Gibraltar. Moreover, Spanish Morocco gives Italy a *pied à terre* in the very heart of Morocco itself. It is these considerations, rather than serious worry over the Pyrenean frontier, which disturb French strategists when they examine the present situation in Spain.

In order to assure its vital communications with Africa, France must maintain its alliance with Britain, while rapidly building up its own fleet. The French fleet, with eight battleships, is at present superior to that of Italy and Germany combined, who have four battleships. Considering ships under construction, it may not remain so in three years' time when France will have ten battleships, Germany five, and Italy eight.⁷

It is, however, in the air that French military preparation has lagged most seriously. In 1933 France possessed the most powerful air fleet in Europe; today it occupies fifth place.⁸ It must always be borne in mind that the air weapon is an offensive weapon. It cannot easily assume, or efficiently discharge, the defensive rôle. This is because there is no possibility of setting up impassable barriers in the air: there are no points of support, such as rivers, mountains and fortifications may afford on the ground; there is no means of canalizing the enemy advance into defiles. The possibilities of evasion are enormous when war is fought in three dimensions. But air power cannot hold territory, nor is it capable of a continuous effort because of limitations of carrying power and time of

4. For this and subsequent statistical data, cf. *Armaments Year Book* (Geneva, League of Nations, 1937); for fuller discussion of French military system, cf. Shelby C. Davis, *The French War Machine* (London, G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1937).

5. Charles Martel (pseud. of Charles à Court Repington), *Military Italy* (London, Blackwood & Son, 1885).

6. *Militär-Wochenblatt* (Berlin), June 18, 1936.

7. Vice Amiral Darlan, "Composition et puissance de la flotte," *Revue Militaire Générale*, January 1938.

8. Lieutenant de Vaisseau Pierre Barjot, *Les Forces Aériennes Mondiales* (Paris, J. de Gigord, 1938).

flight. It cannot, by reason of its limitations, prove decisive by itself.

Air power does not defend well against air power; the best defense against the bomber is the anti-aircraft gun and its appurtenances, the civilian defense measures lumped under the heading of "air raid precautions," and the dispersion of targets—of munitions factories, railway centers, and the like. That—and one's own bombers used remorselessly in reprisal.⁹

It is here that the French air force was found wanting. In September 1938 the German air force represented a grave threat to France; the French air force, a much less formidable threat to Germany. French inferiority in the air was due to internal political, social and financial causes, and to bureaucratic inefficiency.

French military policy after Munich, to sum up, may be expected to turn to the following objectives:

- (1) Increase of the rate of airplane production.
- (2) Abatement of the Spanish threat, to remove fears of Italian or German strategic footholds in Spain or its possessions.
- (3) Closer relations with Britain, France's one remaining ally.
- (4) Increase of the navy.
- (5) Improvement and extension of the fortified lines on the east and north.

France stands all but alone today; certainly alone on the Continent. It still has the most formidable and best army in Europe, an army which derives much of its strength from the fact that, for sixty years, it has annually added a class of conscripts from whom have been selected officer-candidates, noncommissioned officer-candidates, and the personnel of the permanent specialist cadres; year after year, also, a fresh class of cadets has entered the military schools from which half of France's officers are drawn, the other half coming from the ranks. This process still continues. While France possesses such an army, whether isolated or not, its word will have weight in the military councils of Europe.

GERMANY¹⁰

Germany's objective, in contrast to the French idea of security, is expansion, both in Europe and overseas. In Europe, Germany seeks unhampered access to the grain fields of Hungary, the oil and forests of Rumania, perhaps eventually to the raw materials and foodstuffs of the Ukraine. Its pur-

pose is to become blockade-proof in war, economically self-sufficient in peace. Perhaps the most poignant German memories of the World War are the strangling effects of the British blockade. Many years must pass before Germany will be able again to challenge British sea power with such a fleet as it possessed in 1914. The alternative is to secure supplies of food and raw materials which will not be subject to interruption by a naval blockade.

But Germany also hopes that its air power will to some extent offset the British fleet, many of whose bases are within reach of German bombers. It is for this reason—for on no other could such an idea be tenable today in the military sense—that the Reich desires return of its colonies, and perhaps further colonial expansion. Hitler has repeatedly pointed out that Germany must be secure at home before it seeks to expand beyond the seas.¹¹ But, while the threat of German air power overhangs the bases of the British fleet—and bases are just as essential a part of naval strength as ships—no one can be sure that Germany will not, within the near future, as its new fleet expands, seek further extensions of its territories in Africa, further expansion of its influence and trade in the Far East and Latin America.

The German air force, indeed, has in a sense become an instrument of international blackmail. Its head, Field Marshal Goering, was once a devotee of General Douhet's theory¹² of massed air attack on civilian centers for the purpose of terrorization—"breaking the civil will," as it was called. This, however, was a theory only; in Spain and China it has proved somewhat less effective than the Italian general imagined. Today, few students of war believe that Germany would—if at war with France and Britain—risk its magnificent air force in such attacks, whose actual advantage is so doubtful. More likely would be attacks on military objectives—railway centers, the munitions-producing areas of Northern France and the British Midlands, the docks of London through which come England's food supplies, the switching stations of the "grid" which handles most of Britain's industrial power, the naval dockyards, and the like. Many of these objectives lie in thickly populated districts; the slaughter of civilians would be very great. But German air losses also would be very great, and would be proportionate to the magnitude of the attacks and the persistence with which they were repeated.¹³

9. Cf. R. Ernest Dupuy and George Fielding Eliot, *If War Comes* (New York, Macmillan, 1937).

10. Cf. Benoist-Méchin, *Histoire de l'armée allemande* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1938), Vol. II; and Commandant E. Carrias, *L'armée allemande* (Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1938).

11. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1937), p. 281.

12. Cf. Lieut. Colonel P. Vauthier, *La doctrine de guerre du Général Douhet* (Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1936).

13. Cf. Wing Commander J. C. Slessor, Royal Air Force, *Air Power and Armies* (London, Oxford University Press, 1936).

Here lies the threat of the reported great German capacity for producing planes. It is difficult to believe that Germany has created a first-line air force of 10,000 planes, all organized and ready to take off. German rearmament began in 1935; in the fall of that year only 108 planes could be shown in the Nuremberg parade; an estimate based on reliable information gave a first-line German strength of 1,620 planes as of April 1938.¹⁴ At this moment the Reich admits that its first-line strength does not exceed 3,000,¹⁵ and this includes the squadron reserve planes. This strength is not much, if any, greater than Britain's total strength in Europe, including the Mediterranean; it is about 66⅔ per cent greater than the French air force. Moreover, unless a nation is deliberately building against a prearranged date at which it intends to begin a war,¹⁶ it is unwise to assemble any great number of planes in the present state of aeronautical science; for planes are being improved so rapidly that today's miracle is obsolete tomorrow. To maintain any such strength as 10,000 planes merely assures a vast waste of precious material, which Germany, certainly, cannot afford. But speed in replacement is a very different matter. Air staffs estimate that, in a European struggle, the percentage of plane losses might be as high as 90 per cent in the first thirty days of conflict. Obviously, therefore, any continuity of effort would be entirely dependent on the ability to replace those losses rapidly; an industry able not only to do that, but to add new squadrons to the original strength, would give its possessor a great margin over an opponent not so equipped. It is in this respect that Germany, with its state-controlled, integrated economy commanding every detail—labor, distribution, production, management—has contrived to gain superiority over Britain and France in the air.

Of course, it would be necessary for Germany to keep up its replacements of flying personnel, which would be difficult; and it is hardly to be supposed that in command, tactical and strategical doctrine, and the administrative detail which so greatly contributes to war efficiency, the comparatively new German air force is as yet equal to those of the western powers.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind that in Britain at least anti-aircraft defense was not in a state of readiness,¹⁷ there is no doubt that in case of war terrible losses would be inflicted on the people and the installations of Britain and France. This was true

before Munich; it is more so after Munich, since the German air force will no longer be diverted by military resistance in the East.

The German army is as yet far from having reached the state of immediate preparedness of the air force.¹⁸ It was only in 1935 that compulsory military service was resumed in Germany, and the first class of conscripts since 1918 was called to the colors. At present the German army consists of 42 first-line divisions, with 6 additional divisions formed of the old Austrian army. Some of these divisions are incomplete, notably in artillery; in the heavier types of corps and army artillery there is still a severe shortage.¹⁹ There are no reserve divisions (save two in East Prussia) which can take the field as mobile formations. The reserve divisions which have been formed on paper (38 in all) lack artillery, transport and staffs; 26 of them have but two infantry regiments each. Most serious of all is the shortage of officers.

The German problem at the moment is to secure the country from attack in the West, while retaining a free hand in the East. This end has been sought by the creation of the so-called Siegfried Line (now named "Limes" by Hitler), which covers the French, Luxembourg and Belgian frontiers. These fortifications are to be manned, for the present, by the reserve troops which cannot, because of their lack of equipment, take the field.

Until this year, Germany has been content with a single brigade of cavalry. Two cavalry divisions have now been formed, and three more are in process of formation. Since cavalry is hardly needed for a defensive campaign in Western Europe, this is a clear indication that German strategists are now looking eastward, to the plains of Poland and the steppes of Russia. Three so-called "armored divisions" have been formed, and a fourth was to have been created but has been suspended.

All this marks the passing of the old *Blitzkrieg* idea in which a lightning attack was to burst through the French defense lines and overwhelm the *troupes de couverture*, accompanied by a mass air attack on Paris. Germany now plans to remain on the defensive in the West, and proceed with its eastward expansion, facilitated by the bloodless defeat of Czechoslovakia.

Is the German army equal to these severe responsibilities? Despite all that has been said about the powers of the defensive, a careful weighing of the military factors involved compels the conclusion

14. George Fielding Eliot, "How Strong is Germany?" *New York Herald Tribune*, June 19, 1938.

15. *New York Times*, October 27, 1938.

16. Dupuy and Eliot, *If War Comes*, cited, p. 95.

17. *The Times* (London), October 27, 1938.

18. General Niessel, "L'Allemagne était-elle prête?" *La France Militaire* (Paris), October 4, 1938.

19. *New York Herald Tribune*, February 22, 1938.

that at present it could not withstand the shock of French attack.

But the defects of German land armament are defects which time will cure; not only that, but in a few years, as the military strength of the Reich becomes more proportionate to its population, it will resume its old superiority over France.

Germany's naval policy presents a curious series of contradictions. Its naval tonnage, under the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935, is limited to 35 per cent of the British fleet in each category of ships, save that it may have 45 per cent of British submarine strength (to be compensated for by proportionate reductions in other classes).²⁰ The German navy at present has nowhere nearly reached this limit. It is capable of commanding the Baltic as against the Soviet fleet, and of protecting the left flank of an army moving northeastward into the Baltic states. It can conduct submarine operations in the North Sea, but most of its submarines are of small tonnage and cruising range, unsuitable for distant operations. Yet Germany is also constructing two (possibly three) 35,000-ton battleships, and two 19,000-ton aircraft carriers—and these are instruments of oceanic warfare in distant seas.²¹ Their immediate purpose is far from clear, unless Germany envisages a period of colonial expansion with British acquiescence, under the overawing terror of German air power. Such expansion would almost certainly, however, bring Germany into collision with the naval power of the United States.

German military policy may be forecast as follows:

- (1) Maintenance of a strong air force and increase of the capacity for replacements.
- (2) Building up as rapidly as possible of reserve formations for the army, of artillery and heavy equipment, and the training of additional officers and non-commissioned officers.
- (3) Strengthening of the fortifications in the West.
- (4) Reorganization of the army for mobile warfare in Eastern Europe; additional cavalry, armored car and transport units will be created.

GREAT BRITAIN

Traditionally, the military policy of Great Britain has been based on a navy superior to any combination likely to be formed against it—a navy capable of controlling the maritime communications which connect the various parts of its far-flung em-

pire, and along which flows the sea-borne trade which is that empire's life-blood.

Today, the home and Mediterranean bases on which the British navy depends are threatened by the air weapon, while other bases, notably those in the Near East, are menaced by disturbed political conditions. The great Far Eastern base at Singapore is isolated, and has no battle-fleet operating from it. British sea power is no longer the shield of the empire.²²

The British Isles—military, industrial and commercial base of the empire—are no longer in a position of military isolation with respect to the Continent of Europe. The fate of Britain is bound up with the security of France and the Low Countries. This imposes on the British not only the necessity of providing a strong air force, but also of building up a mobile army capable of reinforcing the French in a continental war as its military strength dwindles proportionately to that of Germany.²³ For against the rising tide of German might, backed by the resources of Central Europe, unhampered now by the old eastern threat of the *cordon sanitaire*, only land power will in the end prove decisive. When the *cordon sanitaire* went to pieces with the destruction of Czechoslovakia's military power, Britain necessarily stepped into the vacated place.

The British army is today in a state of flux. Tactical doctrine, as reflected in organization, is causing a profound change in the composition of units.²⁴ During the Czechoslovak crisis, only two divisions were ready to move to the Continent. Now it is reported that the regular army is to be prepared to supply four divisions, and 12 new territorial divisions, highly mobile and thoroughly armed, are to be created.²⁵ This is a sign that the Imperial General Staff recognizes the new responsibilities imposed on it by Munich. Whether recruits will be forthcoming for these new units, however, remains to be seen. It may well be that some modified form of conscription may yet have to be imposed, despite Mr. Chamberlain's qualified declaration to the contrary.²⁶

Another responsibility of the army, that of anti-aircraft defense, is receiving serious consideration. Not only are many of the old territorial units being converted into anti-aircraft commands, but a new

20. Vice Admiral Guse, Chief of the Naval Operations Staff, in *Die Wehrmacht* (Berlin), September 1938.

21. *Weyers Taschenbuch der Kriegsflootten* (Munich and Berlin, J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1938).

22. Cf. George Fielding Eliot, *The Ramparts We Watch* (New York, Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938), pp. 30-43.

23. George Fielding Eliot, "The Offensive Still Gives Victory," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), October 1938.

24. Hanson W. Baldwin, *The Caissons Roll* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1938), pp. 61 ff.

25. *The Times*, October 13, 1938.

26. *New York Times*, October 7, 1938.

anti-aircraft force, to be locally recruited from the employees of industrial plants, is in course of creation.²⁷ This will not be quickly accomplished. It takes time to train officers and men, and there is severe shortage of material.

The Royal Air Force, all things considered, is probably the most formidable air arm in Europe—at the outset of any war. In training, equipment, command and tactical doctrine it stands very high. Its weakness lies in the inability of British industry, without more “controls,” to replace its planes as rapidly as the integrated German industry can replace German losses. In Britain, as in France, there will be a tendency to more centralized control of industry and labor, in an attempt to offset, under democratic forms, the efficiency of the totalitarian states in war preparation.

The British navy is being rapidly increased; when ships at present under construction or authorized are finished—say in 1942—there will be a force of 25 capital ships wearing the White Ensign.²⁸ Since at that time the total Italo-German force will be 13 capital ships, it is clear that the constitution of a Far Eastern battle-force was in the minds of those who authorized this program.²⁹ Whether, as a result of Munich, this plan will be abandoned, is not yet clear.

It must not be forgotten that problems of imperial defense loom very large in Britain today. In Canada, Australia and New Zealand there is a growing tendency to increase local defense forces, while more and more leaning on American sea power for ultimate protection. This is disquieting to British thought; it is emphasized by growing resistance in the Dominions to the return of German colonies, and by growing realization, both in the Dominions and the United States, of the difficulties confronting British sea power.

The troubles in Palestine continue. Italy looks longingly toward Egypt, and its colonial ambitions may be coordinated with Germany's Berlin-to-Baghdad dreams. On the whole, the military outlook of Britain, after Munich, is one of dark forebodings.

THE U.S.S.R.

The primary and controlling fact of Russian national strategy is that the nation faces two fronts, with an active and dangerous enemy at either extremity—and these extremities are 8,000 miles apart, with poor communications in between.

27. *The Times*, October 20, 1938.

28. *Jane's All the World's Fighting Ships* (London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1937).

29. H. C. Bywater, “Britain on the Seas,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 1938.

Russian military thought has naturally turned, first of all, to the improvement of communications. This has led to double-tracking the Trans-Siberian railway, construction of the new Baikal-Amur line, and the advances that have been made in the navigation of the Arctic Ocean.³⁰ Strategic railways and roads have also been constructed on Russia's western frontier.

The Russian army is divided into two parts: that in the Far East, and that in European Russia. The Far Eastern army, about 400,000 strong, formerly under the command of Marshal Blücher, was recently broken up into separate armies, corresponding roughly with the military corps areas in the rest of the Soviet Union. This army has attained a high degree of efficiency; and much has been done to make the Far Eastern area economically self-sufficient by means of local industries and agricultural colonies.³¹ The army of European Russia has made a good impression on foreign military observers: but there can be no doubt that its strength has been greatly impaired by the succession of “purges” which have swept away its senior officers and controlling staffs, and by the system of political commissars which impairs the unity of command so necessary to efficiency in war.³² Considering this, and the paucity of communications which still prevails in European Russia, it may be doubted whether the Red Army could take the offensive in Europe outside the boundaries of the Soviet Union. This very paucity of communications, however, would be a disadvantage to an invader; and Russians have always fought tenaciously in defense of their own soil.

The actual fighting power of the Russian air force remains an unknown quantity. Its strength may be from 3,000 to 4,000 first-line planes. Russian machines and pilots did well in Spain, and have achieved distinction in civil aviation. Whether the high command of the Russian air force would be equal to the strain of a great war is the principal factor which remains in question.

The Russian navy has just suffered a purge which has deprived it of many senior officers. It is hardly equal to the command of the Baltic against even the present German navy. In the Far East, it depends almost wholly on the submarine—that is to say, on corsair operations, never successful in achieving a decision in sea warfare. In the Black

30. Dupuy and Eliot, *If War Comes*, cited, pp. 272 ff; and H. P. Smolka, “Soviet Strategy in the Arctic,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 1938.

31. Cf. Joseph Barnes, *New York Herald Tribune*, November 13, 1938.

32. George Fielding Eliot, “The Russian Army,” *American Quarterly on the Soviet Union* (New York), October 1938.

Sea, the Soviet fleet is barely able to cope with that of Turkey. The history of the Russian navy does not encourage the hope that it will prove an important factor in post-Munich affairs; and its strength is divided among three entirely separate theaters.

The results of Munich have unquestionably had the effect of turning Russia's attention eastward rather than westward; of causing the U.S.S.R. to withdraw—whether temporarily or not remains to be seen—from the troubles of Europe. While Germany's immediate contacts with Russia remain as remote as they are at present, this policy may in the military sense be safe. If and when German influence becomes securely established in Poland, Rumania and the Baltic states, a long common frontier with Germany will create a new set of strategic conditions. The chance of a German-Russian rapprochement, perhaps followed by a new partition of Poland, must not be entirely disregarded.

ITALY

Of all the European powers, Italy is economically the weakest.³³ Within its own territories it has neither iron in any quantity, coal, nor petroleum. It is extremely vulnerable to blockade, and that blockade can be exercised from a distance: from the Straits of Gibraltar and from the Eastern Mediterranean.

Italy's naval expansion, and the coordinate development of its air bases in Libya, the Dodecanese, Sicily, Sardinia and Pantelleria may therefore be anticipated, since only in a naval and air strength capable of commanding the Mediterranean can Italy find even a measure of safety. But this will not suffice, for many of its vital sea routes can be interrupted outside the Mediterranean. Therefore Italy seeks bases for an oceanic navy, as forecast by Admiral Cavagnari;³⁴ one such base, on the Indian Ocean, is under construction at Mogadishu in Italian Somaliland; others, on the Atlantic, Italy hopes to acquire, vicariously or otherwise, in Spain and the Canary Islands. As long as Britain commands the Suez Canal by its control of Egypt and Palestine, Italy's access to its East African empire depends on British good will. This is the explanation of Italian intrigues and propaganda in the Near East. There can be no doubt that Italian imperial ambitions are turning toward Egypt and Tunis.

The Italian army, formidable in numbers (35 first-line divisions), is not highly regarded by competent military observers. Italian troops have not done well in Spain, and much of the artillery is

obsolescent. On the other hand, Italian officers and troops have acquired in Spain invaluable first-hand tactical experience with modern weapons, which is improving Italian organization and tactical doctrine month by month.³⁵

Italy has an air force somewhat larger than that of France, and on the whole efficient and well equipped. Italy, however, is highly vulnerable to air attack, its industries being concentrated in the north and served by electric railways, easily interrupted by enemy bombing.

The Italian navy, like that of Germany, will find its fullest development in the next two or three years; at present, it is hopelessly inferior to that of France in battle-line strength, although strong in smaller types of ships.

After Munich, which may assure Germany's economic domination in the Balkan peninsula, once regarded as an Italian sphere of influence, Italy may be expected to play a subordinate part in Europe, and seek territorial compensation in Africa and the Mediterranean.

CONCLUSION

In closing this military survey of the principal powers of Europe, one factor must be mentioned which is of primary importance. The totalitarian states possess obvious advantages in the matter of industrial production, and their ability to coordinate foreign, domestic and military policy to the achievement of their ends. This efficiency the democracies can offset only by education—the creation of an enlightened public opinion which will support the necessary measures for the safety of the state. These measures may, to some degree, bring about in the democracies a centralization of power, with resulting limitations on individual rights hitherto held inviolate.

But the regimentation of thought, the militarization of youth from the tenderest age, carried on by the totalitarian powers for political as well as military ends, tends to destroy those qualities of individual self-reliance and initiative which today, more than ever before, are vital to the conduct of war.³⁶ It is in this reflection that the democracies of Western Europe may find perhaps the brightest gleam of hope for the future. In the purely military sense, after Munich the advantage began to pass from London and Paris to Berlin and Rome. How that advantage will be exploited only history can disclose.

33. George Fielding Eliot, "Italy's Overestimated Power," *Harpers Magazine* (New York), April 1938.

34. U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Professional Notes, September 1937.

35. Lieutenant Colonel Emilio Canevari, Royal Italian Army, "Forecasts from the War in Spain," *Army Ordnance* (Washington), March-April 1938.

36. Eliot, *The Ramparts We Watch*, cited, pp. 181-82; and George Fielding Eliot, "Men-at-Arms," *New Republic* (New York), March 23, 1938.